Volume 6, Issue 48   Atari Online News, Etc.   November 26, 2004

=~=~=~=

A-ONE #0648   11/26/04

~ AntiSpyware Is Lacking ~ People Are Talking!   ~ Fast Web Use Rises!

~ Zview Is Now Available ~ Google Sues Over Fraud ~ Pasti Is Ready!
~ Philips Back Into PCs! ~ Happy Thanksgiving!!   ~ EU Rules Next Month
~ Next Opera Resizes   ~ Phishers Are Automated ~ New 8-bit Site Open!

              -* Next Opera Resizes On the Fly *-
              -* Firefox Breathes Life In Browsers! *-
              -* Cyber Cops Warn Shoppers: Be Holiday Wary! *-

                          =~=~=~=

->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""

All I gotta say at this point is: Burp! What a day. What a feast!
Everything turned out great today. None of the usual problems during
preparation of the meal. Everything was done on time, and turned out
delicious. The only problem that I encountered was not having any more
holes in my belt to loosen up! But the after-feast nap helped! I'm almost
ready to start nibbling on the leftovers!

I hope that your holiday celebration was enjoyable - a great time to spend
with family and friends. That's what it's really all about. With that in
mind, I'll end this week's comments, and give everyone an opportunity to
relax (and grab some leftovers!).

Until next time...

                          =~=~=~=

               Atari ST Imaging and Preservation Tools

PASTI
Atari ST Imaging and Preservation Tools

Pasti is a package of software tools for imaging and preservation of Atari
software. The two major components are the imaging tools and the emulation
helper tools. The imaging tools produce a disk image file from an original
disk. It works very similarly to standard imaging tools like Makedisk, but
they can image virtually any ST disk including copy protected disks. Imaging
tools are available for different hardware setups, including a plain Atari
ST computer. Capabilities vary depending on the hardware. Specialized
hardware is required for writing back images to a floppy disk.

SOFTWARE PRESERVATION

Our main goal is the preservation of Atari software in its original
unmodified form. Original software is normally stored on diskettes with
custom format or copy protection. Standard tools cannot back up or image
them. But floppy disk recording have a limited life time. It won't take too

long until all original Atari disks will be damaged and lost.

PASTI.DLL

Pasti.Dll is the emulation helper tool for Windows. It extends Atari ST
emulators, adding support for extended disk images. These disk images
support exotic, custom, and copy-protected formats. You can now use
emulators to run ST software in its original uncracked form.

http://pasti.fxatari.com

                            Zview Beta 3

Hi,

New version of zview available.

First, I want to make a big thanks at Arnaud Bercegeay and Dominique
BØrØziat for their work on the gemlib, mem.ldg, libshare and windom.
GREAT WORK MEN !

So, what news it this version?

- zView goes to LGPL.
- TGA read plugin added(15, 16, 24, 32 bits normal and compressed).
- BMP read plugin added(1, 4, 8, 24 bits non compressed).
- JPG read plugin with DSP added. (move JPG.LDG from '/dsp'
   to '/plugin/decoder' and install jpgd.prg in your auto folder).
- Option panel for the jpg encoder added... with this one, you can
   set the image quality wanted, progressive and grayscale mode.
- The image viewer provides now a Info bar with basic information like
   resolution, color bits and image type.
- Add delete function in the menu bar.
- MEM.LDG from dominique Bereziat is now used for memory allocation
   (more safe for MagiC system).
- The dithering routine is now better for 8 and 4 bits resolution.
- Handle of multi-pages Image format; first step for the fax and PDF
   reading.
- Menu "history" activated.
- the "jpe" image are now decoded with the JPG plugin.
- And a lot of bugs fixes!

This version is "normally" bugs free, if you meet one, please, send me a
little report!

A last thing: Many thanks to all the persons who sent me a user report
with the first version, thanks again !

http://the.zorro.free.fr/zview.html

A+
Zorro

atari.fandal.cz Opens

Nils Feske has announced:

A new site dedicated to Atari XL/XE machines recently opened. It features
probably the hugest (and also very well sorted) archive of Atari 8-Bit
games and demos! You can get there about 3.000 games and 1.500 demos
including screenshots and information, which is just an incredible
collection!

http://atari.fandal.cz/

                            =~=~=~=

                      PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                    compiled by Joe Mirando
                      joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho, friends and neighbors. I'm sitting here on Thanksgiving night,
holding my stomach and promising myself that I'll never eat that much at
one sitting again... just like I promised myself last year... and the
year before. You get the idea.

Thanksgiving dinner was, as usual, wonderful. The turkey was tender and
moist, the stuffing was flavorful, the potatoes were fluffy yet firm.
Yes, everything was top-notch. Of course, I had nothing to do with the
preparation of the feast. That might have had something to do with the
positive results. We had dinner at my sister-in-law's, so all of the
food was lovingly made by her.

Of course, I had already 'made the rounds' to my family in the late
morning and was, therefore, already pretty full of turkey. Okay, okay, I
had some stuffing, potatoes, cranberry sauce and apple pie too. The
point is that I already had a medium sized base under my belt
(literally) by the time we got to my sister-in-law's.

After too much turkey and all the associated fixings, we sat and talked
and allowed our meal to 'settle'. It's usually at about this time that I
begin to reflect upon exactly what it is that I've got to be thankful
for. What I've got to be thankful for is, in a word, everything. Living
where I do... and even WHEN I do... is high on my list of things to be
thankful for. So is family. I'm afraid that, in this day and age, family
is highly undervalued. Sure, you get together for holidays and the
occasional summer cookout, but it's not the same as 'the old days'.
While you'll never ever hear me say that my family is perfect, or that
they never get on my nerves, we are a close-knit group.

What I'm the most thankful for though is the fact that I've been blessed
with friends. I've never really had a lot of friends, but the ones I do
have are all very special people. I can remember watching Seinfeld and
thinking "what the hell is wrong with these people? I wouldn't have any
of them as friends".

I think that what surprises me most, even after all these years, is that
my online friends are as dear to me as 'local' friends that I've known
for years... some of them going all the way back to grade school.

My online friends never fail to keep me grounded. They also provide me
with the support that we all need from time to time. For these friends,
I am truly and eternally thankful.

Most of them, of course, I met in the various online services that I've
frequented over the years. Since I mostly frequented the Atari areas of
Delphi, CompuServe and GEnie, the online friends I made were also Atari
users. So we automatically had something in common. Over the years some
of them have come and gone, but I still chat with a lot of them now and
then. That's another indicator of a good friendship... the fact that you
can go without contact for a long period of time and pick up pretty much
where you left off when you finally get back in touch.

What does any of this have to do with Atari computing? I'm not sure. But
I do know that the Atari arena is really the only place I've encountered
it. That says a lot. Not about the computer, but about the users.

Thanks.

Now let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the
UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
====================================

Mark Duckworth posts this about why he thinks we should use MiNT and
Magxnet:

"I notice that some people are still using STing, and even using it under
MiNT. I thought it would be beneficial to point out the reasons not to
use it. Pure and simple, Sting has ridiculous internal latency. In
upwards of 25ms pinging the loopback interface on an ST. Under
MiNTnet/Magxnet you do not have this problem. Latency is much lower.

If you are a CT60 and ethernec user, mintnet and magxnet begins to be the
only sane decision. With mintnet you can perfectly emulate stik and run
all those apps but you can't do vice versa. There's lots of mintnet
internet apps you would miss out on. Like... ftp ;) or telnet.. or
anything. You'll miss out on Sparemint Update Manager too. It assumes
Mintnet. But that's not the real reason. With mintnet you can get
upwards of 400KBytes/sec through your ethernec using ozk's driver. With
sting you won't have anywhere near that kind of performance and things
will probably be a bit more stable.

I understand the text config files can look a bit daunting, but if any
Sting under MiNT users need help setting it up, ask here and I'll answer.

PS: Magxnet offers the same benefits under MagiC too! And it can run
gluestik for stik apps too.

I mean think about it. Once you have an ethernet card, how often do you
go into those stik cpx's? Thought so ;)   So is text mode really that
bad for setting up your ethernet... once?

Not trying to bash on anyone or anything, I just see spectacular performance and reliability and I think others should see it too if they want that sort of thing."

'Coda' adds:

"Besides, If your NIC is (soon to be) a CTLINK or ETHERNAT and you want a proper USB implementation too, then it looks like MiNT/Mintnet is what you will need."

Janez Valant adds his own thoughts:

"I would just like to add that most text configs files are as easy or easier to setup as GUI setup. They are usually quite well documented and explained within the config text (check mint.cnf for example) some even contain too much explanations so they are quite big :) Of course, "i will do all instead of user" installer IS easier, but in case of even simple problem, user is in dark, while in case of text configuration files, one can read cfg file and in case that it is well explained fix many stuff without special knowledge.. and even learn a lot.

Main reason is I think that many ppl use MultiTOS like setup (aka kernel+AES only) and don't have required unix FS structure so they have either to install full MiNT or fiddle with cripple MiNT (i think) or similar... But benefits are worth of end result."

Rade Knezevic asks for help in finding a particular game:

"Is there any link to Atari ST game Vroom. I can't find it on net..."

Edward Baiz tells Rade:

"There is a demo on the web somewhere which is just awesome. The commercial game does not play as good as the demo version."

'Oes' adds:

"The original company that put this great game out still has a website where you can download Vroom and other great ST and Amiga games:

http://www.lankhor.net/jeux/jeux.php3?jeu=32&menu=presentation

Telechargement is download in French but click on the English flag and you can get English version of the games."

Mark Bedingfield jumps in and posts:

"Bloody awesome, thanks mate. I played Vroom to death, when I was younger. I will have to see if it works on the TT. "

Raoul Teulings asks for help with his CDWriter:

"Since a couple of days I connected a LaCie CDwriter to my TT. At

first it all seems to work: the writer was recognized by HDDriver and
I could use CDPro to make a few burns. But then after a restart the
next morning it was all 'gone': the writer was not recognized anymore
and CDPro did not work any longer.

Same thing happened with my Pioneer CDplayer who used to work
in previous times.

Does somebody know what goes wrong? Has it got something to do
with a program that changes the order of the proggies in the
autofolder? Or should I have reinstalled HDDriver after connecting
the writer? (Due to a move of studios I am not able to quickly find my
manual of HDDriver)

Has somebody similar problems? I made two backups and the last
one during the night and this one froze. What might cause that?

When I turn my TT on now I get the message that 'drive c may be
damaged' and after disconnecting the writer this message is gone; so
I guess it has to do with the termination?

I hope that someone can give me a hand here because making CD
backups is very necessary for me because I still work on a daily
basis with the TT...."

Coda tells Raoul:

"My TT acts very strangely in this respect too. I took the Termination
resistors out of the motherboard and connected a JAZ drive, and a CD
drive (in that order) to the external scsi socket. Termination of JAZ
was OFF, and Termination of CD drive was ON. When booting the system,
the hard drive would not be found most of the time. When it did boot,
it screwed the partition up and I had to re-install everything.

What I had to do in the end was turn on the Termination on the JAZ
drive which is in the middle (I know, its not correct), and then the
hard drive booted and the CD was found also. I checked the disks often
and there's no problem. I think what it needs as a permanent measure is
an active terminator after the CD drive."

Alexander Beuscher tells Raoul and Coda:

"In the TT usually the resistor networks in the main board socket are the
only terminators on the SCSI-bus. The internal HD usually is not
terminated. So when you plug external SCSI components to the bus you
should remove the resistor networks from the TT board, turn on the
internal HD's termination (by jumper or by putting in the appropriate
resistor networks), ensure that the TermPWR on the SCSI bus is driven
(the TT does not do this by default) and then terminate the outermost
external component.

In your case it might be that the JAZ is close enough on the bus to your
HD so that its termination can do a similar job as the TT's internal
termination - damp reflections to an acceptable level although the
internal HD is not terminated."

Jim DeClercq jumps in and adds:

"I differ, and not just for the purpose of differing. First, both ends
of the bus need to be terminated, so there is no reason to unplug
the TT terminator packs. The TT cannot provide TERMPWR because it
has a 25-pin connector, and TERMPWR is on pin 26 of a 50-pin connector.
There can be no connection at the TT end of that cable. Something
external has to provide TERMPWR.

On why the bus with the JAZ drive on it works, I agree, for the purpose
of agreeing. Iomega stuff seems to have good terminators, and uncertain
termination selection switches. My ZIP has an external active terminator,
hanging on the end of a 25-pin to C-50 adapter."

Greg Goodwin clarifies some things:

"This is not entirely true. While it IS true that both ends of the bus
need to be terminated, the TT is wired as follows:

Internal hard disk -- the host adapter -- internal terminators --
external connector.

Thus the internal hard disk should ALWAYS be terminated on a TT and the
internal terminators should ONLY exist if you have nothing externally
connected. (Note that most PC and Macintosh computers are wired
differently.)

The TT does not provide TERMPWR. (Some Macs do,
on pin 25 of their 25 pin connector). Therefore, any external drives
must be set to provide TERMPWR and MUST BE ON WHENEVER THE TT IS ON!

I have seen working SCSI busses completely out of
compliance with the "terminate both ends" rule. For instance, my own
Falcon required a "pass-through" terminator in addition to the
terminator on my scanner before it was stable. I have no idea why."

Jim tells Greg:

"The underlying idea is pullups wherever they seem to be needed.

My experience is that the resistor packs stay, and the internal drive is
terminated with its own terminators.

That is working right now, with a scsi bus that has one opening left. But
what do you do with an internal drive of the latest type, with an
appropriate adapter that provided neither terminators or termination
power? Or, for that matter, an external drive that provides neither
terminators or term power?

I think we are picking nits. Pin 25 TERMPWR needs a way to get to pin 26
of a cable. Special and custom cable required.

Following mindless rules is not important. Making a bus work is
important, and that sometimes mean pullups in odd places, or allows
pullups in odd places, or even requires pullups in odd places. Drives do
have capacitance problems, particularly Seagate drives, and may need
extra pullup current. It is probably better to think in terms of pullup
voltage where is is useful than in terms of termination. Nothing
terminates.

While your take on the internal arrangement of a TT is correct, I have
yet to hear of a TT that had a SCSI bus which did not work because the
passive resistor banks were missing. I leave them there, if only because
I would probably misplace them otherwise."

Well folks, that's it for this week. I need a little time to recover from
my gluttony. I mean, after all, we won't be cooking our turkey until
Saturday, and I need to recover some measure of my taste for turkey.
<Grin>

So tune in again next time, same time, same station, and be ready to
listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

                              =~=~=~=

->In This Week's Gaming Section - Nintendo DS: Doubly Good
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Advocacy Groups Attack Games!
                                     And more!

                              =~=~=~=

->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                    Nintendo DS: Doubly Good

If Nintendo's new DS - short for "Dual Screen" - (* * * 1/2 out of four,
$150) was designed to bring innovation to the portable video game market,
so far only developer Sega has completely caught on.

Of six games released with the hardware over the weekend, only Sega's Feel
the Magic: XY/XX, a collection of hilarious and bizarre mini games, will
leave players feeling as if they are trying something they have never seen
before.

Nonetheless, DS is clearly the most powerful and versatile handheld game
system on the market today, with two 3-inch backlighted screens (one of
which is touch-sensitive) and built-in wireless communications.

Nintendo executives say playing the same old games is getting stale, so
they've created this system to bring new life to games. Analysts and
industry insiders speculate that Sony's upcoming PSP (short for
"PlayStation Portable"), due early next year, may be another motivating

factor. The PSP represents the first major challenge in years to Nintendo's domination of the market with its Game Boy line.

Technologically, DS stands out as a huge improvement. Its graphics may not be high art, but they look far better than anything on Game Boy, Nokia's N-Gage or other current systems. With 256-by-192-pixel resolution screens and a processor that is roughly as powerful as the one in the Nintendo 64 console, DS is a vast advance over Game Boy Advance.

DS' wireless networking makes head-to-head play fast and convenient. The system comes with an embedded communications program called PictoChat that lets players send notes and doodles to one another. A demo game, Metroid Prime Hunters: First Hunt, is included.DS plays games on postage-stamp-size wafers that sell for $29, but it also runs Game Boy Advance cartridges.

The system's rectangular shape is fine for conventional games but feels awkward when you use the stylus - forcing players to hold the system in their left hand while gripping the stylus and hitting buttons with the right.

Among the initial games:

Feel the Magic: XY/XX (* * * 1/2, Sega) Boy meets girl. Boy falls in love with girl. But boy is too shy to introduce himself. Fortunately, the "Rub Rabbits" - men with bunny ears - lead the player through tasks guaranteed to earn her true love, including fighting bulls; saving sky divers by using the stylus to type in numbers rapidly; rescuing people from a sand monster; and causing an unlucky pedestrian to regurgitate goldfish by using the stylus to massage his stomach. The games are fun, fast and challenging.

Super Mario 64 DS (* * *, Nintendo) One of the best adventure games of all time returns with new levels, new playable characters and new mini games. The goal of the original Mario 64 was to collect 120 stars; the DS version has 150 stars. The bad news is that the DS' stylus and 2-D gamepad control are not well suited for maneuvering through Mario, a game that defined 3-D adventure.

Spider-Man 2 (* * * 1/2, Activision) Spider-Man tangles with Dr. Octopus, Mysterio and others in a challenging side-scrolling adventure that makes little use of the touch-sensitive screen. The game focuses on solid old-school action, web-slinging and slugging through 14 chapters, some quite large.

Asphalt Urban GT (* * *, Gameloft) There are 25 cars, nine tracks and three kinds of gameplay - arcade, evolution (career mode) and multi-player. Unlike most racing games for portables, Asphalt does a good job of conveying the illusion of speed, though the cars could be a bit more responsive. Asphalt also makes little use of the two screens and touch-sensitive features.

                        "Game Off" Urged

An assortment of politicians, religious leaders and social advocacy groups lashed out Tuesday at the video-game industry and retailers, saying they make violent and racy games too accessible to children.

In a press conference that featured an annual "report card" from the

National Institute on Media and the Family, publishers were given a B-minus for the accuracy of games' content ratings and retailers were given a D for voluntary enforcement of age-based sales restrictions.

In another event - a conference call led by the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility - a number of successful games were denounced for moral "depravity," as well as insufficient ratings safeguards.

Doug Lowenstein, president of the Entertainment Software Association, dismissed the attacks as grandstanding.

"These groups are driven by what they need to do to get attention," said Lowenstein, whose organization represents computer- and video-game publishers.

Both groups offered lists of games that families were urged to avoid giving to children as holiday gifts. Four of the first five on both lists were the same: "Doom 3" and "Half-Life 2" for PCs, "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas" for PlayStation 2 and "Halo 2" for Xbox.

The "Grand Theft Auto" series is often singled out for glorifying crime and the killing of police officers.

Retailers were lambasted for allowing sales of Mature-rated games - suggested for people 17 and older - to children as young as 7.

But a retailers' trade group said in a statement that improved enforcement programs were still being implemented.

Members of Congress supporting the report-card event included Sen. Joseph Lieberman (news, bio, voting record), D-Conn. On the conference call, speakers included New York City Council member Eric Gioia.

Group Cites Video Games for Violence, Sex

Video games that have players shoot rival gang members, watch bare-breasted women and recreate the assassination of President Kennedy were criticized Tuesday by advocacy groups that said, at the least, they should be kept away from children.

In issuing its annual report card on video games, the National Institute on Media and the Family urged the industry to educate parents better about ratings and asked retailers not to sell such games to younger teenagers.

"This segment of games keeps getting more realistic, and they keep pushing the envelope," David Walsh, the institute's president, said at a news conference. "The problem is that these games are the ones that are particularly popular with kids, particularly teenagers."

Another group of church and civic leaders, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, also urged video game makers to place tighter restrictions on the sale of violent video games to children, including having retailers place them in locations less accessible to children.

The video game trade association said its games carry appropriate ratings and recommended that parents police the activities of their children.

Among those listed as the worst games of the year was "Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas," a game in which the hero vows to avenge his mother's murder and restore glory to his neighborhood gang. Players rack up points by gunning down police, committing carjackings, burglarizing homes and dealing in other underworld activities.

The game debuted in October and instantly became the year's best seller, part of a series of "Grand Theft Auto" games that has sold more than $32 million over the past few years. The institute's list also includes "The Guy Game," which features video of women exposing their breasts.

Like others on the group's list, the games are rated "M" for mature, which means retailers are not supposed to sell them to people under 17. Walsh said some of the games should be rated "AO" or "adults only," which would limit purchase to those 18 and over. Many stores will not carry games with that rating.

The institute blamed game retailers for lax enforcement, citing a survey it conducted this year. The survey found that half of underage boys and 8 percent of girls who tried were allowed to buy M-rated games, the group said.

A trade group that represents game retailers said it is premature to criticize stores because they already are putting a new enforcement policy into place. The Interactive Entertainment Merchants Association has pledged to create tougher standards by December to forbid the sale of mature games to children.

Doug Lowenstein, president of Entertainment Software Association, said all the games on the institute's objectionable list are rated M, which he said shows the industry is doing its job.

"The reality is that most of the time when kids get these games, they get them from an adult or a parent, and that is a failure of parenting," Lowenstein said. He also cited a survey that showed that most parents agree with the rating system.

Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., credited the industry for creating many good games but said the small percentage of games with extremely violent or pornographic content is "worse than ever."

"The fact that the assassination of President Kennedy, which broke our hearts and altered our history, could become the subject of a video game from which people are making money is just outrageous, it is despicable, it's unbelievable," Lieberman said.

The "JFK Reloaded" game, released Monday to near universal condemnation, is available only by downloading from the Internet. Lowenstein said the game does not come from a mainstream company and agreed that its subject matter was inappropriate.

=~=~=~=

Firefox Excites Web Browser World

Firefox 1.0 appears to have sparked new activity in the Web browser market.

The release of the open-source Web browser by the Mozilla Foundation last
week prompted Microsoft to break the silence about Internet Explorer.
Meanwhile, America Online is breathing more life into the Netscape brand
with a preview of a new Firefox-based browser scheduled to be unveiled on
November 30.

Microsoft has no plans to release a new version of IE until the next
version of Windows, code-named Longhorn, due out in 2006. Still, the
Redmond, Washington-based company says it has the option to add features
to IE by way of the browser's add-on technology, says Gary Schare, director
of Windows product management at Microsoft.

"It is an option for the Internet Explorer team to add functionality in
between releases. We do not have specific plans at this point to use it,
but it is an option," Schare says. Microsoft's MSN group already uses the
add-on mechanism for its MSN Toolbar.

Microsoft has not released a completely new version of IE in years. Windows
XP users recently got a browser upgrade with Service Pack 2 (SP2) for
Windows XP. SP2 included features such as pop-up blocking and security
enhancements, but those updates won't be made available for IE on earlier
Microsoft operating systems, Microsoft has said.

While some people working on IE at Microsoft are maintaining the current
version of the browser, most of the team members are focused on IE for
Longhorn, Schare says. The Longhorn browser will include new features,
improved security and privacy features, and better support for third-party
developers, he says.

For end-user features, Microsoft is looking at better ways to manage
favorites and tabbed browsing, a feature to improve the browsing experience
by consolidating multiple Web pages into a single window organized with
tabs, Schare says. "Basically making IE a more functional and feature-rich
browser," he says. Firefox and other browsers that compete with IE already
offer tabbed browsing.

Meanwhile AOL's browser unit Netscape Communications is preparing to
preview a new browser based on Firefox. "It is based on Firefox, but will
be Firefox Plus, it has got improvements beyond Firefox," AOL spokesperson
Andrew Weinstein says.

The preview, a so-called alpha release, is due on November 30. The new
browser and a new e-mail client will eventually replace the current
Netscape offering, Weinstein says. He declines to detail product details.

AOL released Netscape 7.2 in August, but that product is based on Mozilla
1.7, a suite of products that includes a browser, e-mail client, Internet
Relay Chat client, and Web page editor.

Riding a continued high, the Mozilla Foundation keeps counting Firefox
downloads, which hit 4.7 million last Friday morning, a spokesperson says.

The rise of Firefox, first introduced in February this year when Mozilla renamed its Firebird project, has been remarkable. The browser held 3 percent market share at the end of October, according to WebSideStory. The Mozilla Suite, Netscape, and Firefox together held 6 percent of the market at the end of October, up from 3.5 percent in June. Though losing share, IE still dominated with 92.9 percent of the market, according to the San Diego Web metrics company.

Firefox is the Mozilla Foundation's stand-alone browser. The Mozilla open-source project was started in early 1998 by Netscape, which was acquired later that year by AOL. Last year, the people behind Mozilla created a foundation, largely funded by a $2 million pledge from AOL, to build, support, and promote Mozilla products.

Next Opera Browser Will Resize on the Fly

Opera Software ASA wants to make horizontal scrolling a thing of the past in the Web browser.

The Oslo, Norway, company announced Tuesday that its new browser release will include a feature for rendering a Web page to fit a screen regardless of the screen size. Called ERA (Extensible Rendering Architecture), the feature is available in the latest test version of Opera 7.60.

Most Web pages are designed for display on desktop or laptop computer screens with a width of 800 pixels or more, forcing users with smaller window or screen sizes to scroll across pages to fully view them, Opera said. ERA dynamically resizes pages to fit any screen size.

"Opera's vision is to enable people to access their favorite Web sites on any device, and ERA means that users can have a great Internet experience on any screen regardless of a Web page's width, tables or frame," CEO Jon von Tetzchner said in a statement.

Opera plans a full release of Version 7.60 in January, slightly behind its original target of late this year, a spokesman said. The new release also will include new voice browsing capabilities, performance improvements and a revamped user interface.

Opera makes the third most-popular Web browser after Microsoft Corp.'s Internet Explorer and the open-source browsers from the Mozilla Foundation. It supports multiple platforms including Windows, Mac OS X and Linux.

With ERA, Opera is bringing together earlier rendering technologies that fit pages on the screens of mobile devices and televisions into a single architecture for its desktop browser.

The technology also solves a common printing problem, where part of a Web page is cut off because it did not fit a screen. ERA can resize a page to fit the paper's width, according to Opera.

Voice browsing is a key addition to Opera 7.60 and is available in the latest technology preview. Opera in March announced a partnership with IBM to combine IBM's Embedded ViaVoice technology with the browser.

Speech-enabled browsing lets users speak commands to navigate Web pages as well as to have the content of pages read through text-to-speech

technology. Opera initially is targeting the speech technology to English speakers and to its Windows browser.

After a Decade, Philips Makes PCs Again

After an absence of a decade, Philips Electronics is making personal computers again, the company said on Thursday. The Netherlands-based electronics conglomerate, which abandoned the PC business in the early 1990s after suffering big losses, quietly introduced six models together with British retailer Dixons earlier this week.

The Dutch company said it had not wanted to draw attention to a "soft" launch of products that would only be available in a limited number of shops in six European countries, including Britain, Ireland, Spain, Italy and Nordic countries. "It is a tactical decision to take an opportunity that came along," a spokesman said.

The deal with Dixons means Philips has found another retail outlet for the Internet-connected products it has co-branded Streamium. The PCs, branded Philips-Freeline, have been preconfigured to work with other Streamium products, so consumers can simply stream music from their PCs to their Hi-Fi set or television over a wireless connection.

Until now, Philips aimed to sell Streamium products through telecoms companies as part of a broadband Internet bundle.

Otherwise the Philips computers are standard items that run the same hardware and software as other PCs. Philips itself is already a major supplier of displays and CD and DVD drives to computer makers such as Dell and Hewlett-Packard, with whom it will now also compete.

The PC business is still a cut-throat industry where profit margins are thin or absent, except in the case of a few top players including Dell, Windows and Office software maker Microsoft and Pentium microprocessor producer Intel.

Philips is the world's biggest lighting maker, a top three hospital equipment maker, Europe's biggest consumer electronics producer and the region's number three in semiconductors.

Tools Let Spyware Slip Through Cracks

With the threat of a sophisticated spyware attack looming, a renowned security researcher says the most popular detection and removal tools "fail miserably" at addressing the growing spyware/malware scourge.

Just days after hackers seized control of a banner ad server and used it to load malicious programs on vulnerable machines, researcher Eric Howes issued failing grades on all anti-spyware scanners he tested during a two-week stretch in October.

Howes, a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, found that the best-performing anti-spyware scanner failed to detect about 25 percent of the "critical" files and registry

entries installed by the malicious programs.

"One thing I found out for sure is that no single scanner removes everything," Howes said in an interview with eWEEK.com.

"I had an inkling before doing the test that the results would come back like this. But it still is disappointing to find that the tools, in many cases, are basically useless."

"The anti-spyware tools missed things that simply reinstalled what was deleted," Howes said, likening it to a cat-and-mouse game being won by the bad guys.

The results rated the Giant AntiSpyware detection tool as the best of the 20 scanners tested, but even then, Howes said the software detected only 100 out of 134 "critical" files and registry entries.

"Some of them are just terrible. In some cases, there were only 18 critical detections. What's the point of missing critical files? It's all going to come back anyway," he said.

"Critical" detections include executable files (.EXE or .COM), dynamic link libraries (.DLL), BHO-related registry entries, toolbar-related registry entries and auto-start Registry entries.

Howes said companies that stealthily load spyware are using elaborate tricks to hide component files on computers. "They hide the files very well on the system and use complicated techniques to detect and replace component parts. If you rip out one or two parts, the undetected parts will come in and replace the files that you took out," he said.

During the tests, which pitted the top 20 anti-spyware scanners against spyware that comes embedded with peer-to-peer programs such as Grokster, Howes said he discovered that the malicious applications were capable of blocking the scanners.

"In the second and third group of tests, one of the installed programs prevented the anti-spyware scanners from running on reboot," he said, noting that reboots are a common method used by anti-spyware scanners to remove stubborn spyware and adware that remain in memory on a PC.

During the first round of tests, Howes found that McAfee's AntiSpyware rated very poorly, picking up only 56 of 134 critical detections. InterMute's SpySubtract (72/134), Aluria's Spyware Eliminator (42/134), Lavasoft's Ad-Aware (82/134) and the popular Spybot Search & Destroy (40/134) also scored very low on detecting "critical" files.

Howes said things go so bad that, at one point during the tests, he found that he had missed a single executable file. "When I started the test box the next day, the next set of tests was compromised because of that one executable. Within a couple of minutes, the box was completely loaded again with spyware," he said.

Howes, who maintains a privacy and security page, recommends that users infected with spyware use two or more scanners in combination, as one will often detect and remove things that others do not.

Benjamin Edelman, an anti-spyware advocate who researches the methods and effects of spyware, said he was not surprised by the test results. "Eric's work proves that paying more for spyware detection doesn't mean getting

more. He found that the more expensive programs aren't necessarily better than the free versions."

Edelman, a Harvard Law School student, has been monitoring spyware installations and chronicling the research findings on his Web site.

"We're very, very far from having a magic bullet solution. We're not dealing with fly-by-night operations," Edelman told eWEEK.com. He also warned that many bogus anti-spyware programs are circulating and exacerbating the problem for consumers.

Cyber Cops Say 'Tis the Season to Be Wary

As the holiday shopping season ramps up, cyber cops warned on Wednesday that online fraudsters are working over time.

Analysts from the Global Threat Command Team at Web and e-mail filtering company SurfControl (SRF.L) said phishing attacks - spam e-mails in which scammers lure people into divulging personal or financial information - are becoming increasingly sophisticated and growing at a month-over-month rate of 20 percent to 25 percent.

Prior phishing scams were somewhat easy to spot. Either the lure was rife with misspellings, or potential victims clicked on links that routed them to ersatz sites that tried to appear legitimate but didn't look quite right. But new scams are more sophisticated and harder to identify as phishers employ spammers, hackers, virus writers, and Web designers.

"'Tis the season when people will be most vulnerable to such scams," said Susan Larson, SurfControl's president of global contacts.

In one of the latest attacks, a phishing e-mail claimed to be confirming an eBay purchase made through the Web auctioneer's PayPal online payment system. The e-mail, which requested information that could be used to steal money from the victim's bank accounts or credit cards, was fraudulent.

Others look more innocuous but contribute to the problem.

One offers to send children a Christmas greeting from Santa in exchange for home or e-mail addresses.

Another asks for similar personal information and promises participants a $200 gift card from Macy's department store.

Larson said the latter cases are probably examples of groups that are harvesting live e-mail addresses to sell.

"There is no Santa Claus coming to you this season on e-mail," she added.

Larson said consumers should continue to be very wary of unsolicited e-mail. She and others reiterated their recommendation that consumers never give out personal or account information by e-mail.

If consumers need to respond to an e-mail information request, Larson recommends that they go directly to the site themselves and that they avoid following links provided in e-mail.

Phishers Getting Automated, Report Says

The Anti-Phishing Working Group (APWG) has released a report that shows disturbing trends in phishing activity, including greater use of automation and more potency in fraud campaigns.

In October, the APWG witnessed massive increases in the number of phishing sites, most of which were being operated outside the U.S. This spike in phishing activity most likely is an indication that new and powerful tools have been deployed, the group said.

"Phishing has been increasing in seriousness for some time," APWG chairman Dave Jevans told NewsFactor. "It's cause for concern. We need to be focused on this problem."

Besides the increasing number of phishing sites, it also is notable that the sites are being hosted on what appear to be compromised broadband PCs, the APWG noted.

This is an indication that some automation is involved, and phishers are using a bot network to either send e-mail, host more sites, or both.

Also notable is the finding that the number of brands subjected to the largest phishing attacks rose from four to six in October.

Usually, Citibank is the prime phishing target, but the increase in brands indicates a broadening of attack subjects.

Because of sophisticated tactics, phishing has been garnering a great deal of attention lately.

In early November, a new technique was reported that showed users were being duped by blank e-mail and self-launching software.

Only a week before, the Secret Service arrested 28 individuals suspected of being part of a global organized cybercrime network that used phishing for identity theft and credit card fraud.

With the APWG report, it would appear that law enforcement tactics have limited effect. There is some hope in anti-phishing technology, some have noted, and browsers like Firefox are trying to beef up their anti-phishing features.

For now, though, the best antidote for the problem seems to be user education.

"There are many different approaches to stopping phishers, but what we need first is better knowledge on the part of users," Jevans said. "They have to understand not to click on URLs in e-mail, for example."

While the word is being spread, it is possible that a greater level of automation will make for more numerous victims. "It takes time for user education to take hold, but hopefully it will decrease the number of incidents eventually," Jevans said.

Google has filed a lawsuit against an Internet marketing firm, claiming the company defrauded Google's advertising network with false ad clicks.

The lawsuit alleges that Texas-based Auctions Expert International signed up to display Google's text advertising on its site, and then fraudulently clicked on ads to exploit Google's pay-per-click payment system.

According to Google's filing, Auctions Expert created its site and signed up for Google's programs with the sole intention of collecting advertiser fees through false clicks.

Filed November 15th in California, Google's civil case is one of the first involving click fraud, although the subject has been discussed frequently over the past few years by search engine marketing firms and others in the industry.

In March 2004, click fraud was brought into the spotlight when a California man was arrested and charged with extortion and wire fraud in connection with developing Google Clique, software designed to automatically click on paid ads.

In its SEC filing a month later, Google noted that the company was at risk of fraudulent clicks on its ad network, adding that it has regularly paid refunds related to the practice. Google also reported that it expects such refunds to increase.

Beyond taking fraudsters to court, as it has with Auctions Expert International, Google may find it has a tough job ahead in stopping click fraud.

"As long as there are marketers, there will be interest in gaming the system, especially around advertising," Meta Group analyst Tim Hickernell told NewsFactor. "Google is going to have to constantly stay ahead."

For every tweak and new feature that search engine vendors make, there will be a set of marketers trying to figure out how to exploit it, Hickernell added.

Although this may cause pain for Google, such difficulties could have a bright side, in keeping search technology advancing forward.

"Problems like this keep search engine companies fresh, and force them to review their algorithms," said Hickernell. "Ultimately, that benefits users."

Some in the marketing community are not so convinced that Google's motives in the lawsuit are as straightforward as they seem.

"I'm glad this is being pursued in court, because it absolutely should be," said Jessie Stricchiola, president of Alchemist Media, a company that has been handling click fraud for a number of years.

"However, I think this particular action by Google is a strategically political move within the industry that deflects attention from how the company isn't as proactive with their advertiser relationships as they should be," she told NewsFactor.

Taking Auctions Expert to court is important, said Stricchiola, but in her opinion, Google should be spending more time on resolving issues with refunds and technology for its advertisers.

"This lawsuit is a deflection from the fact that their technology is not as good as they say," she said. "They're putting their attention in the wrong place."

EU Ruling On Microsoft Due In mid-December

The European Union's second-highest court will rule in mid-December on whether to suspend EU sanctions against Microsoft pending an appeal by the US software giant.

Bo Vesterdorf, president of the Court of First Instance, gave the dates of December 18-20 for the ruling after convening parties to the case including Microsoft and the EU's executive commission for a meeting.

The meeting was called to determine whether testimony from software firm Novell and the Computer and Communications Industry Association should be scratched from the record after they reached a settlement with Microsoft.

It was agreed that the prior testimony of the two former supporters of the European Commission's case would remain on the record, clearing the way to a mid-December ruling, sources present at the meeting said.

"I can confirm that the prior testimony of Novell and the CCIA remains on the record," a Microsoft spokesman said.

The Seattle-based company has asked for a stay of the European Commission's anti-trust sanctions - a hefty fine and enforced product changes to its Windows operating system - until the court can eventually rule on its appeal.

Software-Based Radio Gains Support

A technology that could transform wireless communications got a boost last week when the U.S. Federal Communications Commission announced its first approval of a software-defined radio.

The Vanu Software Radio GSM Base Station from Vanu can support multiple cellular technologies and frequencies at the same time and can be modified in the future without any hardware changes, according to Vanu Chief Executive Officer Vanu Bose.

Software-defined radios like Vanu's could lower costs and provide new flexibility in wireless networks, says IDC analyst Shiv Bakhshi.

Traditional radios are hardware components built for a particular frequency range, modulation type, and output power. Software-defined radios, or SDRs, consist of a flexible radio controlled by software running on a computer or device. The concept goes beyond cellular base stations to other types of radios, such as handheld devices that can switch from one network to another to suit a particular application or environment.

The FCC applauded the technology in a statement on the approval. Software-defined radios can help users share limited airspace and prevent interference, the FCC says.

Vanu's GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) base station is a Hewlett-Packard ProLiant server running Linux, coupled with an ADC Telecommunications Digivance radio subsystem. Using an off-the-shelf server and standard operating system allows Vanu to ride the declining cost curve for processing power, Bose says. Though the price of the current product is close to that of conventional base stations, according to Bose, the equation is expected to change.

"It is going to change the entire cost structure over time," IDC's Bakhshi says. In fact, the new approach is so revolutionary that it's hard to know what benefits will come of it, he says, comparing it to the change from analog to digital cellular networks. Though large operators will not make the switch quickly from their conventional radio networks, some have signaled interest in the technology, Bakhshi says. Cingular Wireless, Orange PCS, and NTT DoCoMo all are members of the SDR Forum industry group, along with Intel, Motorola, and other infrastructure companies.

Vanu, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is first targeting small, rural operators, Bose says. Those carriers want to support multiple cellular technologies so they can secure roaming agreements with more than one major operator, he says. Software-defined radios let them do that without investing in new hardware each time they add a new technology. For customers of the major operators, that should mean better coverage, Bose says. Vanu launched a trial with Mid-Tex Cellular last year and is now installing its base stations on the De Leon, Texas-based operator's network. Bose believes the company is two years away from a direct sale to a top-tier U.S. carrier.

The FCC was supportive during the approval process, according to Bose. Its main concern was ensuring that software-defined radios don't cause harmful interference, he says.

Outside the U.S., software-defined radios could be a boon to mobile operators in less-developed countries, Bose says. The technology provides the flexibility to combine different grades of hardware and software to strike the right balance between cost and network resiliency. Most cellular systems today ensure 99.999 percent, or "five nines," reliability, he says.

"For certain areas, such as rural or developing areas, five nines is overkill because it prices the network right out of the market," Bose says. "Now they can make a choice."

Fast-Internet Use Doubles in U.S.

The number of Americans using fast Internet connections doubled from 2001 through late 2003, still below some expectations and especially low among minority groups and people in rural areas, according to a report by the Bush administration.

During the election campaign, President Bush advocated affordable access to high-speed Internet services for all Americans by 2007.

The Commerce Department report, prepared in September but undisclosed until after the election, said use of fast Internet connections grew dramatically through October 2003 to 20 percent of U.S. households. The report praised such services for fueling online banking, entertainment and commerce.

Some experts said growth was disappointing, far behind countries that include South Korea, Taiwan and Canada. The report also identified troubling figures for use or availability of high-speed Internet services among blacks, Hispanics and people in rural areas.

"It shows we continue to have a significant divide between urban and rural America in the infrastructure for the economy of the 21st century," said Gregory L. Rohde, who was top telecommunications adviser under President Clinton.

Only one-in-seven blacks and fewer than one-in-eight Hispanics lives in a household with fast Internet service, said the report, titled "A Nation Online: Entering the Broadband Age."

One in four white Americans used high-speed connections at home. In urban areas, 40.4 percent of households used fast connections; only 24.7 percent of rural users did.

Significant numbers of rural Americans said they couldn't subscribe to high-speed services because none was available. Most Americans who did not use fast connections said service was either too expensive or they did not need it.

"This is lousy," said Harris Miller, head of the Information Technology Association of America, a leading industry trade group in Washington. "We're just not keeping up with our competitors. We're not even keeping up with countries we don't consider competitors. It's not acceptable."

The government's report was prepared in September. But the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration did not disclose its findings - based on the Census Bureau's population survey of 57,000 U.S. households - until Friday, when it published the report on its Web site.

"It takes us awhile to get these reports prepared and compiled and published," Commerce spokesman Clyde Ensslin said. "We are occasionally questioned about the timing of reports. That comes with the territory. The review and approval process was not complete in September."

=~=~=~=

internet site, in whole or in part, by any agent or means, without
the expressed consent or permission from the Publisher or Editor of
Atari Online News, Etc.

Opinions presented herein are those of the individual authors and do
not necessarily reflect those of the staff, or of the publishers. All
material herein is believed to be accurate at the time of publishing.